

## **The Day**

The second I stepped into the car, I sensed something wrong. I immediately realized she had tear stains on her right cheek. I pretended not to notice and said, “Hi mom, I had a good day at school.” “So can we go to Target to buy me a birthday present?”

“Yes,” my mother replied lifelessly. Then, without warning she started to cry.

“What’s wrong?” I asked.

“Someone very dear to me died today,” she replied tearfully.

“Who,” I asked trembling. “Do I know him or her?”

“It was your Uncle Gene,” my mother said in a near whisper. She was crying harder now and I followed suit. I let her know that Target could wait. I felt my mom’s pain as we flooded the car with emotions.

The day I would think to be the happiest of the year, my birthday, God decides to steal my uncle from the family. We drove to Target anyway, in silence.

## **Major League Pressure**

Pressure, major, major pressure. Here I am, it’s the fifth inning and I’m one of the youngest pitchers in the league facing the best team in the majors. I watch as the fourth batter steps up to the plate. I look around the field to make sure everyone is ready. I look back at the batter. He has an evil grin on his face and fire in his eyes, an “I’m

going to hit it out of the park,” sort of look. I get the sign and start to sweat. I begin my motion and think, “I’ve got to throw this pitch well, I’ve got to throw this pitch well.” As I release the ball, it spins slowly toward the batter and his eyes light up like light bulbs. I pray that the ball curves. As the batter swings, the ball arcs out and away from the bat. In my mind I hear the whiff of the bat cutting through the air. I got this guy, this time.